

Fifth Sunday of Easter

[Windchime]

Welcome, friends, to our Easter season Sunday worship.
We begin in the name of God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's lessons are about the deepening of our connectivity with God.
Jesus uses the image of 'I am the Vine; You are the Branches', and all of these texts are speaking to you from such a place of profound intimacy that I would like to invite you to curl up on the couch--if that is where you are. Make sure the coffee is warm. You may want to shut your eyes, and just let the beauty of these words, poems, and prayers just sink into your hearts.

Psalm 22.

So now Holy One,
Do not be far from me
Be the center
Of the center
Of the circle
Be the strength of that center
The power of the absence that is the center
Deliver my life from the killing sharpnesses that assault me
Deliver my soul from the feverish dogs that surround me

For you have not scorned the poor and the despised
Nor recoiled disgusted from their faces
From the weak and vulnerable your spark has never been hidden
And when they cried out in their misery
You heard and answered our ancestors
And you have ennobled them
And it is the astonishment of this--your endless enduring presence--that I
will praise in the Assembly
Making deep vows in the presence of those who know
your heart
Knowing that in you the meek eat and are satisfied
And all who seek and struggle to find a tongue to praise
I will encourage, saying to them:

May God's heart live forever
May all the ends of the earth remember and return to the Holy One
And all the families of all the nations bow down before you
For all of this is your domain, the whole of the Creation

Your flame kindles all that lives and breathes
And you, you are the motivating force of all activity
The yearning of the grasses, the lovers' ardor
And they that rise up, who live, and eat the fruits of the earth
They too will bow down before you
Before you will bow all those who lie down, who find peace,
who return to the dust
For none, none of us can keep alive by our own power--you alone
light our soul
Distant ages to come shall serve you, shall be related to
you in future times
Those people not yet born
Will sing of your uprightness, your evenness, your
brightness, your calm.
They too will sing to a people not yet born and that is still yet to come
They will sing that this is how you are
You, whose flame kindles our lives, and breathes within us.

[Windchime]

Our Gospel for today is from **John, chapter 15, The True Vine**. [15: 1-9]
Continue to just rest and relax into this Word of life.

*Jesus says, I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away,
and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes
to make it bear even more.*

*You have been pruned already,
by means of the word that I have
spoken to you.*

*Remain in me, as I in you.
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,*

*unless it remains part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.*

*I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in you, bears fruit in plenty;
for cut off from me you can do nothing.*

*Anyone who does not remain in me
is thrown away like a branch--and withers;
these branches are collected and thrown on the fire.*

*But if you remain in me and my words remain in you,
you may ask for whatever you please and you will receive it.
It is to the glory of God that you should bear much fruit
and be my disciples.*

The Word of God. Praise to you, O Christ.

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Salvation is not flight from the wrath of God. That's what Fundamentalism is. It comes from a place of fear--that we can never measure up or please God. Instead salvation is accepting and reciprocating the love of God. That's everything Jesus was about. To place him as Supreme Judge or the Ultimate Accountant who's going to track all of your sins is...sad. How far we have come from the core of the Gospel, which is about our accepting in, delighting in and reciprocating the love of God--measureless, utterly measureless.

Salvation is never separation. Salvation is the beginning of unity with all that is, with all that has been, with all that will ever be. Salvation opens us; it connects us. And there is no salvation, as these texts make eminently clear today, there is no salvation without love. That's the core of our identity as people of Christian faith. How has that gotten forgotten, or buried, or lost?

There is no salvation without...loving. For it is love that leads us to profound mutuality--with one another, with God, and with his aromatic creation which surrounds us today. That's why the encouragement to stay connected with the Word of Life: Stay Connected. It is deeply personal, but

that deeply personal connection is what leads us to the necessity and the fullness of community.

Mahatma Gandhi was asked, 'What would a truly non-violent world look like--a world that practiced truth and delighted in compassion? What would that actually look like?' And Gandhi said, 'I don't know. It's impossible to imagine, because people would be acting from their deepest, inner, freest self, but always for the sake of the mutuality with the other, for the blessing of life. It would be endlessly creative. It is beyond description--deeply personal, deeply communal.'

Well, I thought to share with you today a poem by Wendell Berry, Kentucky poet and farmer, a gifted, gifted person of insight. And this poem is about staying connected, about intimacy, and also nurturing the freedom of who each of us is. It is called, '*The Mad Farmer Liberation Front Manifesto*'.

*Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be a punched card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.
So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all that you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what human beings*

*have not encountered we have not destroyed.
Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant.
Say that the leaves are harvested
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophesy such returns.
Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.
Two inches of humus every thousand years!*

*Listen to carrion — put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world and laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Is what I am about to do
satisfactory to a woman who is soon to bear a child?
Will my choice disturb the sleep
of a someone preparing to giving birth?
Go with your love into the fields.
Lie easy in the shade. Rest your heads
in each other's laps. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.*

Practice resurrection.

Amen.

“Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front” from The Country of Marriage, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1973.

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Our gratitude today to Rose Barto, who put together this beautiful gift of flowers for us and our worshipping community here at Peace, scattered near and far. Thank you, Rose!

We keep in our prayers today:

The family of Don, friend of Howard Barto--Don died this week--and all who are mourning his death. God in your mercy.

We prayer for Karen, Bev's sister;

For Drew, and Dennis, and Seth;

For Ed Klitsch, Dana Squire, Marshall Moore;

Doug Shuffield, John Dahlin;

For Bob Worthington and Bob Mantei;

Brian Schultz, Stanley Ngessa;

For Kyle and Mark;

George Perko, as he continues to recover,

For Maili and Kersti and Fei.

We pray for Lennie, and Grant, Heather, Kelsey, Joane Henry;

Roger Powers, Elisha Bowling;

For Cory and Diane;

Gratitude for Kate, whose tumor was benign;

We pray for Mary and Jack and Ruth;

And all those we silently name in our hearts.

[Windchimes]

O God, the mystery of life is your endless gift to us. Nourish, sustain, heal those who are hurt and suffering. Bring to us the spirit of connectivity to you and all those in need of your mercy, that we in our days here may fulfill the vows that we have made, each in our own way, to be a blessing to life. Continue to diminish COVID among us, that we might be renewed, together, in recreating this world in the image and imagining of your love.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Glory be to God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit, and upon us weak and wounded people, upon us amazing and beautiful creatures, may mercy and compassion be shed in both worlds, now and forever. Amen.

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.